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Buenos Aires

February 28, 1978

Mr. Claus Ruser,  
Director, East Coast Affairs,  
ARA/ECA, Room 4906,  
Department of State,  
Washington, D. C.

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

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Confidential - All of Text

Your letter, dated February 23, 1979 arrived this morning. It's always beneficial to receive your comments.

Human Rights: As you can judge by my cables, I am constantly pressing GOA for improvement in the field of human rights. I'm not offensive or insulting to President Videla, General Viola, Harguindeguy, etc. I'm forceful in my approach in the need to improve their stance in the field of human rights. I don't air USG grievances to the media or the public. I very specifically make my approaches to GOA, as they are the ones that can bring forth improvement and changes.

None of us at this Embassy are proud of GOA's record in the field of human rights. We deplore it and let them know about it. As I told you in my last message there hasn't been a single high interest case, whose freedom has been obtained, in which I have not been personally involved. I always end up with Videla and Viola on these cases. The last one was Susana Panero yesterday.

I refer you to B.A. 1614 and 1502 -- my last interviews with Viola. I hammer on this man constantly on human rights. He is President of the Junta and Commander of the Army. I have reported what he has said. He predicts substantial improvements in the field of human rights. We shall wait and see. The onus is on his back. It isn't we aren't pressing. We do that seven days a week. I also refer to memcon by John Corr, APAO, on his meeting Raúl Kraiselburd, Publisher of El Día -- La Plata newspaper. Kraiselburd can be categorized as being objective. His father was murdered by terrorists and his father-in-law disappeared. He has a running battle with Governor St. Jean of Buenos Aires Province. Let me quote from that memcon:

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"In January the three Buenos Aires provincial police units charged with fighting terrorists had been disbanded and their officers had been sent to outlying villages so that they would be able to "deaccelerate". The reassignment of the officers had caused some consternation among the police; however, orders to take up new posts had been obeyed." There are other interesting facets to the memcon that make worthwhile your reading.

I also refer you to today's DAO IR No. 6804004779, Arg. Military HR, Views (a) DTG 281635z FGB79 outlining Admiral Schuller's visit with some of GOA's military leaders.

The New York City Bar Association Visit:

We shall be very happy and glad to offer all assistance possible to the New York City Bar group. They should be so advised. If they seek a briefing, we are also glad to accommodate them.

Economic Background:

Out of the recent economic consultations in Washington, the agreement on meat testing proved to be a major plus for the Argentines. There are snags but Argentines feel confident these problems will be resolved. The Treasury team has had good follow-up talks on double-taxation treaty. When the U. S. group left it was with full confidence that a treaty would be signed soon. Klein was pleased to have met Undersecretary Cooper.

The Economic section continues to devote many man hours to trade promotion. The Japanese and EC countries are also active and have the solid support of their official export financing agencies. Sweden just sent in a new trade man with the rank of minister. Everyone is out to get a share of the 6 billion reserve, waiting to be spent. I doubt if at this time there is another U.S. Ambassador that has talked about the subject of human rights as often and as consistent as I have. Argentina knows where we stand in the subject. Furthermore, they know what we think of their poor performance. I think perhaps B.A.0550 outlines this Embassy's thoughts on the subject. This just isn't the Ambassador's thinking. It is pretty well Embassy consensus.

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Larry Birns: The threats and charges of Larry Birns are well known in Buenos Aires. Most media people know him well. It has gone so far that a few days ago I had a call from a U. S. Senator who said he was told by a lower-ranking State Department employee that the Department was mad with me and was replacing me with Frank Ortiz. The story goes on that Barbara Shelton was being sent to Barbados. He also told me that Larry Birns had teamed up with a small segment of State Department people and boasted he would get me fired. I didn't realize policy was set by Birns and that he handled personnel. "Lo que será, será". After this rumor, I expect other Senators to be calling. I guess I'll be reading about it in one of the gossip columns.

Pleased to hear from you and we are giving it the maximum at this end.

Sincerely,

Raúl H. Castro  
Ambassador

RHC:mmmp

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